DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 566 PS 013 230

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TITLE Stress and the Adopted Child.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 34p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adjustment (to Environment); *Adopted Children; *Coping; Emotional Response; Guidelines; Resource Materials; *Stress Variables
IDENTIFIERS *Adoptive Parents

ABSTRACT

This discussion typifies various persons potentially affected by an adoption and describes 19 stresses adopted children may experience at one time or another. Nine signs of stress in children and 17 ways adopted children and adoptive parents can cope with stress are listed. A concluding packet of resource materials lists books for adopted children and their parents/families, filmstrips, and agencies offering help and support to adopted children and/or their families, additionally providing a brief discussion of things to consider in adopting the hard-to-place child. (RH)

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STRESS AND THE ADOPTED CHILD

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INTRODUCTION

Children do not like to differ from others in any important respect. It is self-evident that adoption is a significant event in any child's life. Being adopted most times makes a child feel much different from the children who live with their biological families. Adoption is a stressful event and can cause many problems for a child, as well as, the other people involved. The aim of this paper is to share and consider just how stressful adoption can be.

I feel it is also necessary to show the other side of the coin. The side where there are children waiting to be adopted. Not all children are lucky enough to have the opportunity to be adopted. The term 'nuclear family" is common to most of us; we often assume that almost every child is part of one. But to a part of this country's child population, "family" does not mean the father, mother, and two children idealized by many writers. There are children who have no families, or who cannot live with their families.

Traditionally some of these children have been welcomed into the homes of older brothers, grandmothers, cousins, or distant relatives. What about the others? They most likely grow up in foster homes until they are adopted, if ever. Adoption provides families for children who otherwise would remain parentless and permanently deprived of the physical and psychological benefits of a family life. It would be wonderful if there were enough couples willing to adopt a child, but this is a myth. Couples seeking to adopt a child want the child who fits their expectations. Not too many people want the children who are older, handicapped, or of a minority race.

I added all this information to the introduction to show that there is a "need" for children to be adopted. Every Sunday in the Sun-Times there is a special article written by Vicki Gerson entitled, "Sunday's Child". The articles show the picture

of a different child each week who needs a home. My heart drops to my feet each time I read one of these articles. I realize that these children must be desperate to belong to a family.(See the attached articles on page 3.) These children must deal with the stress of needing a family and the children who are adopted must deal with the stress of a new family. I would like to begin my paper with this beautiful poem by Judith Wright:

BIRDS...

Whatever the bird is, is perfect in the bird.
Weapons kestrel hard as a blade's curve,
thrush round as a mother or a full drop of water
fruit-green parrot wise in his shrieking swerve--
all are what bird is and do not reach beyond bird.

Whatever the bird does is right for the bird to do--
cruel kestrel dividing in his hunger the sky,
thrush in the trembling dew beginning to sing,
parrot clinging and quarrelling and veiling his queer eye--
all these as birds are and good for birds to do.

But I am torn and beleaguered by my own people.
The blood that feeds my heart is the blood they gave me,
and my heart is the house where they gather and fight for
dominion---
all different, all with a wish and a will to save me,
to turn me into the ways of other people.

If I could leave their battleground for the forest of a bird
I could melt the past, the present and the future in one
and find the words that lie behind all these languages.
Then I could fuse my passions into one clear stone
and be simple to myself as the bird is to the bird.[1]

---

[1]Evelyn Felker. Raising Other People's Kids. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981. Page 1.

Raymond needs a family he can trust

Sunday's child

Vicki Gerson

Raymond, 13, has a dark complexion, curly black hair, dark eyes and a slender build.

Raymond responds to discipline and structure in a positive way. He appreciates honesty and straightforwardness in other people. Because Raymond is starved for adult attention, he acts like he doesn't need people. Raymond has told his caseworker, "I can handle it myself."

Raymond needs people, but he is afraid of being rejected by them. Raymond has been in foster care since 1979 and still remembers his mother, who put him up for adoption.

WHEN IT COMES to doing chores, Raymond is dependable. He does what is expected of him at the children's home, and to receive extra money, he volunteers to empty garbage cans.

Raymond is good at sports. He is on the children's home basketball team. He also enjoys bowling, baseball, swimming, bike riding and sledding. Raymond loves the outdoors and will only play indoors during inclement weather. When indoors, Raymond watches action and detective shows on television.

During the school year, Raymond is in special-education classes. Although he functions at the fifth- or sixth-grade level, depending on the subject, he could do better. Raymond needs someone to provide motivation and to help him develop study skills.

RAYMOND'S CASEWORKER said: "Raymond needs parents who can set limits. He needs a family that won't downgrade him. He needs parents who can give him positive but firm parenting.

"Raymond will be wary of his new home situation. Sensitive, self-assured parents are necessary.

"Since birth, Raymond has had a slight tremor in both hands. He takes medication to help control the tremors, but this problem does not interfere with his sports-minded life.

"A subsidy is available for the family that adopts Raymond."

If you would like to adopt Raymond or any other waiting child, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 800-572-2390.

RAYMOND

Raymond - From the September 26, 1982 issue of the Sun-Times. Living Section - pg. 17.

Richie is a loving and affectionate child

Sunday's child

Vicki Gerson

Richie, 12, is a young Robert Redford with straight blond hair and blue eyes.

Richie is well-mannered, loving and affectionate. He is not a fighter or overly aggressive. He likes adults and is ready to live in a home he can call his own.

As a young child, Richie was neglected and malnourished. When he was 2, Richie entered foster care. For the last two years, Richie has lived in a children's home.

At his home, Richie not only completes the chores that he is expected to do, but he also volunteers for more work to earn extra money. He can be depended upon to dust the furniture and empty the garbage cans.

RICHIE LIKES TOYS that have little parts he can put together. He also plays with puzzles or games like checkers or Monopoly. Richie is a collector. If he visits the beach, he will bring seashells home.

Whenever he can, Richie spends time outdoors. He swims, roller skates, rides horses, plays tennis, fishes and camps.

Richie likes to watch family shows like the "Brady Bunch" or "Diff'rent Strokes" on television. He wants a home and a family that can belong to him.

RICHIE'S CASEWORKER SAID: "Richie has just become free for adoption. He needs a two-parent family, although a single parent will be considered. He could be an only child, or he would do well with younger children in the family.

"With proper motivation, Richie will catch up in school. Right now he is in an ungraded classroom functioning at the sixth-grade level.

"A subsidy will be available for the family that adopts Richie."

If you would like to adopt Richie or any other waiting child, call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 800-572-2390.

RICHIE

Richie - September 19, 1982 issue of the Sun-Times.

MEMBERS AFFECTED BY ADOPTION

Before discussing the actual stresses in an adoption situation let us first look at the people affected. Who are the people affected by adoption?

1. Adopted Child - Of course the adopted child is affected directly. They are the ones being adopted. Each child is unique and each child faces adoption differently. There are some similarities in some cases, but not all. Keep in mind, the majority of adopted children had some history in foster care between the time they were removed from their home and the time they were placed in an adoptive home.

   While I was doing research I came across some interesting information. In China, there is a preference to boys. Chinese families believe that daughters are only temporary members of the lineage into which they are born. The adopted child in China is thus almost always a boy. Now in the United States it is a little different, the preference is usually for the "cute children." My mother and her six brothers lived in an orphanage for most of their youth. They were all beautiful Polish children with light skin and light hair. Many times couples offered to adopt all seven of them. The couples in the United States seem to look for the typical, blond and blue-eyed child. One other point to keep in mind is that most adopted children in the United States were born out of wedlock to young mothers, usually giving birth to their first child.

2. Parents(Adopters) - The adopters face the challenge of a new child that is not biologically theirs. Most of the people who adopt children are unable to conceive their own child. Getting over the infertility slump can cause a great amount of stress for the couple. Remember,

adoption is choice. Adopters choose to adopt, they are not forced.

If the couple already had children they probably have a good idea what is in store for them. If it is a couples first experience it may help if they prepare themselves for the new addition to their lives. To relieve some stress the couple should learn about child development. If the child is a newborn when adopted it is much different than if they are eight or nine years old.

3. Siblings in the Adopters Family - Problems may occur if there are other biological or adopted siblings in the family. Also, different problems may arise when a couple produces their first child after adopting. Conception by a previously infertile adoptive mother is unlikely, but possible.

4. Biological Mother and Father - They have a great deal to cope with. They must face their child living with someone else. In most cases the birthparents cannot provide for the child's needs and it is the best for all members involved. According to the law the birth parents have the right:

    1. To privacy from the public, but not from their own child.
    2. To put their own requirements into an adoption contract.
    3. To waive their option of confidentiality at the time of adoption, or at any time afterward.
    4. To explore the concept of open adoption - which would entail meeting with the adoptive parents before relinquishment and working out a necessary agreement.
    5. To updated information about the child's development while he or she is growing up in the adoptive family.
    6. To special consideration from the legal system should they petition to meet their child before he or she reaches legal age.
    7. To determine the time and place for meeting with a child who has searched for them in such a way that will preserve their privacy.
    8. To contact a child who has reached adulthood.

5. Grandparents - The new grandparents to the adopted child can play a key role. Sometimes they are the ones that make the adopted child feel part of a family. Older people, like grandparents, usually have a warmth about them. Also, having a grandma and grandpa will make most adopted children feel just like most of their friends who are not adopted. In most cases, grandparents are quite supportive. Keep in mind, that there are the few cases where grandparents feel upset and unaccepting of an adopted grandchild, instead of a biological grandchild.

6. Extended Family(Aunts, uncles, cousins, etc...) - They must accept the child into the family system. In some cases, people will look down on adopted children. This can cause the adopted child to feel rejected and hurt. The child may feel resentful toward the extended family. I will go into this aspect later in the paper.

7. Foster parents/family/mother - Foster homes are a mainstay of the adoption agencies. They provide the maternal care a newborn baby needs and give the birth parents time to choose the best course of action. Foster homes are the modern repository for children of broken homes and neglectful parents. They have taken the place of the orphanages of past generations.

There may or may not have been a foster family/mother/parents. If there was some foster care then the situation can be difficult for the child who is not an infant. The child may not want to leave, or the foster family may not want to give the child up. To understand some of the problems, following is a passage about a foster mother's experience:

> Mrs. Hanson had only one problem. She couldn't keep babies more than six weeks without becoming so attached to them that their departure was a painful loss to her. The only compensa-

tion was to begin again with another three-day-old infant. When babies lingered longer than three months(there were situations that made delay necessary), I anticipated a difficult separation for her.

I will not soon forget the trauma of taking away a toddler Mrs. Hanson had had for over a year. I telephoned to let her know when I would arrive. I came to her door and rang the bell. I waited outside. A moment later she partially opened the door and handed the little boy to me. No word was spoken. No sympathy expressed. As I turned away I heard the proud and reserved Mrs. Hanson burst into tears. The very heart which made her such a superb foster mother also brought her unmitigated grief.[2]

6. Peers or Friends of the Adopted Child - How will they react toward me? That is probably what the adopted child will ask himself. Some peers may treat the child badly and others will realize that everyone is unique. This area will be covered a little more later in the paper.

These are some of the people affected by adoption. Now that we have a pretty good overview of the members involved let us move on to the next area of concern.

STRESSES ADOPTED CHILDREN HAVE TO DEAL WITH

All of us have experienced stress at one time or another, in our personal relationships, in our work, in our health or in all of these and in other areas as well. But adults are not the only people who experience stress. Indeed, it can be argued that stress is likely to be most evident during periods of most rapid change. Childhood is a period during which we develop most rapidly, and a strong case can be made for stress being especially prevelant in adopted children. The

[2]Linda Cannon Burgess. The Art of Adoption. W.W. Norton & Co., 1981.

adopted child has to deal with the every day stress, as well as, the stress of being different. To begin with, categorizing children as "adopted" sometimes makes it difficult for other members of the community to accept them fully. The label alone can cause a child many problems.

This section of the paper deals with stresses that adopted children may experience at one time or another. Here are some of the stresses adopted children face:

1. Wanting to Belong - This involves self-esteem. Many adopted children have very poor opinions of themselves. They lack a good self-concept and therefore try to belong. They long to be accepted by peers, relatives, society, family, and teachers.

   It is very important to the child's future and his present well-being that he develop confidence in himself and his ability to contribute to others. To develop positive self-esteem, the child needs four things:

   1. A sense of belonging.
   2. A sense of competence.
   3. A sense of worth.
   4. A sense of meaning.

   The sense of belonging grows out of the adopted child's feeling that he is an important part of his family. The security of belonging to a family gives the child the confidence he needs to function in the world. The adopted child can be encouraged by following these steps:

   1. Do not do for him what he can do for himself.
   2. Do not overtask and discourage him all the time.
   3. Limit your criticism - Also, on the other hand, the child does need a certain amount of sincerity. Give praise only when deserved.
   4. Help him handle his incompetencies.
   5. Teach him/her to talk positively.
   6. If the child has trouble with schoolwork, try to arrange to get him extra help as soon as possible.
   7. Encourage the child to do things as a family.
   8. Show the child you accept him and think he is O.K. (Adopted children need to feel needed and wanted.)

2. Hereditary Ghosts - Many adopted children feel lost because they do not know their biological parents. Everyone else is born into families, but the adopted

child was chosen. One adopted girl writes:

I Never Was Born

> I could not imagine anything to do with my birth. I never knew the location of the place until I was twenty-nine.
>
> I thought God planted a seed in your body and it grew into a baby.
>
> I felt like I came from a book, like the one that told me I was chosen.
>
> I always believed adopted children weren't born. That a stork brought them, just as my adoptive mother said.
>
> Dad always said, "We found Jane under a rock."[3]

Eventually, most adopted people long to meet their real parents which is normal. Some adopted children remember their parents because they lived with them until they were adopted. Such as in a case where both parents died. We say that time heals all wounds, but this adage is not always true. Deep inside, some children fantasize about their biological parents, and as they get older they desire to meet them. Here are some important points to keep in mind in terms of the child's biological parents:

1. The culture in which the adopted child is growing up in considers bloodlines important.
2. A child's seeming indifference to the subject or apparent lack of memory may mask deep-seated hurt that has not healed.
3. Telling the adopted child misinformation can cause bigger problems.
4. Children who are uninformed will grow into men or women who need concrete information about their biological background.

Adopted children are faced with the tension of hereditary ghosts and it can become quite difficult for them. Love is very much bound up with exclusive possesion

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[3]Lifton, Betty Jean. Lost and Found. New York: The Dial Press, 1979. Page 20.

in our society, and it hurts most adoptive mothers to admit to their child, and even to themselves, that they did not give birth to him. To avoid this stress, or at least minimize it, the adopters should be honest and allow the child time to work out and cope with their hereditary ties. Allow the adopted child to see that it is normal to want to know their biological parents. Support, love, and honesty are the key coping factors.

3. Settling into a New Home/Separation Anxiety - If a small baby is adopted, little more is involved in the transfer than wrapping the child in a shawl and taking him home. The older the child, the more difficult it is to transplant, and nowadays most institutions insist that adoptive parents and children get to know each other over a period of time before the child moves into his or her new home. It can be quite devastating for an older child to cope with an unfamiliar environment.

Every child who moves from one home to another feels some separation anxiety. Emotionally the adopted child must first adjust after moving in with his or her new parents. For the older or adolescent child this can cause them a lot of stress. They may become cool and aloof, protecting themselves from rejection. Or a child may be rough and aggressive, trying to get you to throw them out or send them back. He or she might also regress in behavior: a eight-year-old may resume bedwetting. Following are the steps which seem to help the child cope with the loss of one home and the acceptance of a new one. I accumulated these five helpful steps by using the readings from a few books.

1. Give the child a transitional period. - Let the child become familiar with his new home before he moves there. Also, adopters should get acquainted with their new child before they move in.

2. Let the child take some of his past with him. - clothes, toys, and other familiar objects.

3. Let him know that he does not have to reject the people he is leaving. Surprising as it may seem to an adult, a child does not always realize

that he can love a new person without giving up the old. This mistaken impression can be corrected if both the "old" parent and the "new" parent mutually encourage the child to love both of them.

4. Recognize that separation involves grief and that a period of mourning is perfectly normal.

5. Reassure the child as often as possible.

4. Telling the Child He or She is Adopted - This alone can cause loads of stress. Children do not want to differ too much from the norm. "Adopted" is an emotional word stirring up reactions from the depths of the unconscious. Words associated with adoption are generally negative: wayward, orphan, unwanted, bastard, illegitimate. No wonder adoptive parents are so sensitive and fearful to label their children "adopted." Many times revealing the facts of a child's adoption are more traumatic for the parent than for the child.

It is important that the parents tell the child that he or she is adopted. Hesitation in telling the child may result in the children learning about their adoption from others in most unfortunate ways.

How can a parent tell an adopted child and not cause unnecessary stress? Well, books are a great help. Also the parent or parents should have a healthy attitude themselves. Talking to the adopted child and answering all his or her questions is also important. Make sure you help them realize that they are special.

5. Self-Identity Crisis - The "Who Am I?" crisis. The adopted child may get stuck on this question because he or she does not always feel that they are important. In order to have a good solid self-identity they first need to have a clear view of where they stand. In other words, they need to fit in somewhere.

The adolescent adoptee is the child who now struggles to form a mature identity. Many adopted teenagers can fall into a place where they "have no name." They may be confused about the credibility of the adopters. It

can be so difficult and stressful that they overload with feelings of guilt, denial, anxiety, and repression. Adolescence is difficult to begin with, and being adopted causes an added pressure. Being there to talk with the child can help quite a bit. Also, understanding.

6. Rejection - A child may feel insecure and mistrustful when he or she is rejected. The adopters may not actually reject the child, but some of these children are so afraid of being rejected tha they lead themselves to feel rejected. Adopted children need help in feeling secure. They may have a lot of fears that biological children do not have. They may not be sure what is going to happen to them. They also may have been switched from foster home to foster home which made them feel insecure.

7. Physical Development - Adopted children may feel the stress of bodily changes, especially during adolescence. Proper physical development is directly related to good physical health. Parents of the adopted child should know a child's development patterns and be able to notice if a child may be developing in a peculiar way.

Physically, adopted children resemble their biological parents, and may look altogetherly different from their adoptive parents. The adopted child may need help in coping with their physical inheritance. They need to know that they are not weird. Helping the adopted child cope with physical inheritance can be done by talking with him or her, and encouraging the child to respect his or her uniqueness. Also point out that even biological children look different from their parents.

8. Intellectual Development- All children want to be smart, I do not know any child who wants to be dumb. Being below average can cause a child stress. In recent years an interesting question has been much debated: Which influences a person

more---genetic inheritance or enviornment? The question probably never will be settled. In any case, it is worth remembering that intellectual development is a combination of different factors. We do inherit certain abilities, but we also are influenced by our environment. To relieve some of the stress, the adopted child must be told honestly about his biological parents and inheritances. Adopted children must be encouraged, the parents should not set outlandish goals and form too high of expectations.

9. Emotional/Social Development - A child's emotional and social development are interdependent, and usually parallel each other. This is true from birth. As the adopted child becomes older, he wants to feel competent socially. The fact that a child is "adopted" may mean that peers may not accept him. Adopted children need emotional support from their families.

10. Psychological Stress - In 1971, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement on identity development in adopted children. It recognized that many adopted children, by virtue of their adoptive status, will experience a degree of emotional stress that does not occur in children living with their natural parent or parents.

    There is quite a bit of psychological stress placed on an adopted child. According to the National Bureau for Co-operation in Child Care, the stress may make its first appearance while the baby is still in the uterus. Sounds strange to some people, but Mia Kellmer Pringle also believes in this. She notes that often the problems which eventually motivate a mother to yield her child to adoption are preying upon her during pregnancy. Anxiety and stress can adversely affect the child while still in the uterus, and during infancy.

11. Spiritual Development/Moral Development - This area of a child's development may also cause stress. Actually, very few children under the age of twenty are able to see reasons behind laws, to internalize principles, and to establish priorities among principles. My mother grew up in an orphanage, Saint Hedwig's,

where she felt that one of the best aspects of living with nuns was that you learned good solid morals. Parents who adopt can encourage a child's moral development in the following ways:

1. Give reasons for rules.
2. Use some family worship times to tell stories that illustrate moral dilemmas.
3. Introduce the child to a variety of other children so that he can learn to positively assent what he believes.
4. Encourage the child to belong to your family in every way - spiritually, emotionally, etc...

12. Discipline - Punishment usually is a well known and widely used form of discipline. But, punishment can be dangerous! It is dangerous because sometimes it gives us excuses to act badly ourselves. Extreme and rigid discipline can cause stress for any child. The adopted child in particular may fight against the disciplinarian. He or she may feel that adopted parents have no right to hit someone who they did not "bring into this world." In order to be effective the adopters should be alert to stress signs. Some children misbehave because they are unhappy, insecure, imitating the bad behavior of others, or environment is too complicated for them.

In one interview I did some interesting feelings came our from an adopted women, 32 years old. She said, "I used to misbehave because I felt that my parents played favorites toward their biological son. I would get so angry, because he got more attention. So, I would misbehave and sometimes be noticed." This favoritism may be real or imagined, but either way it is stressful for a child.

Most important in the discussion of discipline is the fact that no child should ever be physically hurt. Harsh, excessive punishment may distort the child's view of adults and make it difficult for him to relate emotionally to other people.

13. The Child of Another Race or Culture - After a period of hoping for an integrated society, we now are in period in which we are thoughtfully re-evaluating what we have accomplished. What about the adopted child- Vietnamese, Indian, Korean, Black - who is raised by a white family? How is this child affected?(Especially in a society marred by racism.) Raising a minority child is not easy in a white society. Most important is the child's self-image. Sure they are going to feel stress, I would. It helps if you develop the minority child's self-image and worth. The Indian, Black, or Vietnamese child can believe he is beautiful and worthwhile because he belongs to one of these races, and that is O.K. Never allow the child to hide his heritage. It is something that he or she should be proud of and take pride in.

The adoptive parents must help the child develop a strong racial identity. Also, discuss the negative aspects of racial identity with the adopted child.(i.e. racism, prejudice) Basically, give the child the opportunity to make him aware of his race. Show the child that you accept him, and most likely he will accept you.

14. The Older Adopted Child - The American Academy of Pediatrics reports a higher psychiatric referral rate for adopted children than for the general population. The frequency of emotional problems of the adopted decreases with diminishing age at placement. It can cause a lot of stress on a child who is older to all of a sudden have to settle in with new people. Perhaps he or she has been in other placements which failed or else the child may have been shifted from one foster home to another. Convincing such children that you are not going to disappoint them is difficult. They feel very vulnerable. They are in a new environment, with unfamiliar people and new friends. They need a lot of support to cope.

15. The Handicapped Child - In the 1950's and early 1960's many types of

handicapped children were presumed better off in hospitals and institutions.[4] Gradually the attitude has changed. Community services are gradually integrating the handicapped person into the normal flow of society. Adoption may become an important part of this new exciting future for handicapped.

The mentally retarded are the hardest to find homes for. Mostly because they look retarded. The physically handicapped do not experience the same difficulty. No matter what, the adopters must be special. These children do need added attention, but some people do a fantastic job as adoptive parents for these children.

The child and parents may experience stress in this situation. The adoptive parents may have to face attitudes of rejection from relatives, friends, and the community. The child must deal with the same stress. If the adoptive family works together the adoption can be successful.

16. Sibling Rivalry.- Whether it be other biological siblings or adopted siblings, rivalry is quite normal. It may discourage the parents and put stress on the adopted child, but most times peace can be reached. Although all families fight sometimes, destructive quarreling among children is not healthy, and should be discouraged.

It can be quite stressful for an adopted child to get along with a biological child, in the same family. The adopted child may feel that the biological child is cared for more. In some cases it can cause very bad problems:

> Sandy was a girlfriend of mine since I was four-years-old. She was adopted at birth by a couple who was unable to conceive. Then when Sandy was three-years-old her mother became pregnant. Her adoptive mother had a baby boy, Michael. From that day on all I can remember is Sandy being very sad. Her mother beat her all the time. I can still remember when they had to take her away from the adoptive parents, she was 14 years old. Someone that lived next door reported the mother. Later on, I found out that the brother also was mean to Sandy. I often visited her after that in the foster home she lived in. My mother would take me there. I did not really understand it then, but now I realize how much she must have suffered.

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[4] Lasnik, Robert S. A Parent's Guide to Adoption. Sterling Publishing Company, 1979. Page 62.

Like I said, some cases of sibling rivalry can be destructive. Social workers are quite aware of the stress between biological and adopted siblings.

17. Community Attitudes - Another dimension of stress for the adopted child is being accepted by the community. Prejudices of many varieties has always existed in communities. Adopted children need help in tolerating the outside pressure.

Even extended family members may not accept the adopted child. The reactions of relatives may be positive, negative, or a little of each. Talking with the child may help. Also, the immediate family should be supportive and stand tall. It is important not to let community attitudes stand in your way of adopting. It may be difficult, but where there is a will, there is a way.

18. Friendship/Peer Acceptance - All children want to be socially accepted. For the adopted child it may be even more difficult. Peers can be mean and not many of them want to associate with someone they feel is different. Growing up socially demands that a child increase his cooperative skills. The adopted child must learn to accept himself and others.

Making friends and being accepted is important to all children, but can cause extra stress for the adopted child. It may be more difficult for the adopted child because they feel rejected. If the adoptive parents reassure the child, many times they can easily stand on their own two feet. This is why it is so important for the adoptive parents to encourage a child's self-esteem.

19. Teacher's Attitudes - Most adopters follow their own inclination in the matter of whether or not to confide in others, but a recurring question which seems to provide conflict is whether to tell the school and teacher. The difficulty

is that each school is different and each teacher different. Some teachers may not be phased by a child being adopted, and will treat them no different than the other children. Other teachers may be overly concerned. The teacher's attitude will make a difference because they are the role model for the rest of the children in the class. Hopefully it will be a good experience, but keep in mind not all experiences are good. Adopted children need to feel that they are O.K., the teacher can help the child feel this way.

I have given nineteen of the stresses an adopted child may face, these are just some of them. According to H.J. Sants, adopted children have the burden of adoption stress - the stress to which they are subjected as a result of their particular status.[5] Adoptors need to be aware of stress signs in their children. Just briefly, a few stress signs may be when a child:

1. Has a behavior change or inconsistent behavior.
2. Has loss of appetite or excessive appetite.
3. Regresses, withdraws, or becomes passive.
4. Begins to stutter, wets the bed, bites his or her nails, or has bad nightmares.
5. Has frequent headaches.
6. Does not want to go to school.
7. Becomes depressed.
8. Is often irritable.
9. Has insomnia or tend to over sleep.

All of these and many more may hint that the child has a problem or is under stress. Of course, stress is a part of life. If the adopted child is under stress it may not be outwardly noticeable. Recognizing stress as an ongoing part of life is important, and children may need their parents to point this out to them. There is not a specific recipe for how to raise adopted children, but adoption can be turned into a positive experience if adopters teach their children early to make stress a positive force in their lives.

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[5] Lifton, Betty Jean. Lost and Found. New York: The Dial Press, 1979. Page 48.

WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS FOR THE ADOPTED CHILD AND PARENTS(ADOPTERS)

Many life experiences are stressful. It is not possible, or even desirable, to eliminate all stressful life experiences. So, how can the adopted child and parent cope with the stressful experiences they face? Following are some of the ways for the people involved to cope with stress:

1. Books - for the parents and children. Understanding the stress is half the battle. At the end of this section I have made up a list of books for adopted children and their parents.

2. Filmstrips - I also made a list of filmstrips available. Filmstrips are a useful method of exposing possible stresses in life to adopted children and their adoptive parents.

3. Support Groups - I have also prepared a list of support groups for adopted children and their adoptive parents.

4. Music - Music can be quite helpful, especially for children in the preschool years. There are many records which deal with individuality and being special, these would be helpful.

5. The Story of Me Book - Parents can allow the child to put together drawings, magazines pictures, photographs, and stories of who they are and how they feel about themselves. This helps in promoting a child's positive self-concept.

6. If parents and children communicate it is easier to cope with the stresses.

7. If the parents prepare the child for the actual adoption, the stress involved can be reduced. When I say parents I mean adoptive parents.

8. Parents should show the adopted child affection and love.

9. Parents and children should balance work and recreation.

10. Social interaction for children is good, and so is role-playing.

11. Parents should use the word "family" rather than "parents" whenever possible. Adopted children cope better when they know they are part of a system.

12. Support from teachers and the school community helps the child and parents.

13. In some cases professional referrals are necessary. Some possible referrals include:

    A. Play Therapy.
    B. Family Therapy/Group Therapy.
    C. Counselors.
    D. Social workers.
    E. Hospital programs.
    F. Psychologists.
    G. Mental-health facilities.
    H. Psychiatrists

14. Laughter - a sense of humor can help parents and children cope with stress.

15. If the adoptive parents want to know more about children, they can write to: Family Service of America
44 E. 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010
This group does child studies.

16. Single-parents can join Parent Without Partners - which are often sponsored by local churches.

17. Being honest can reduce the stress for the parents and child.

Following are seven pages marked "PACKET." These pages are part of the materials I collected for the packet I put together for the class.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: BOOKS FOR ADOPTED CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS/FAMILIES

For some children and their families, reading can be a wonderful and valuable way to cope with the many problems they face. Here is a book list of the many book available for adopted children and their adoptive parents/families. All of the books listed are excellent. The stress adoption may cause can be easily coped with if all the parties involved are able to see that other people feel the same way they do.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Blue, Rose. Seven Years From Home. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Raintree Editions, 1976.

Buck, Pearl S. Welcome Child. Photographs by Alan D. Haas. Day Press, 1963. K-3rd grade level.

Bunin, Sherry. Is That Your Sister? New York: Pantheon, 1976. Summary: For ages 5-12. Young adopted girl narrates scenes from her interracial family's life.

Caines, Jeanette Franklin. Abby. New York: Harper and Row, 1973. Preschool level.

Caudill, Rebecca. Somebody Go and Bang a Drum. New York: Dutton Press, 1974.

Connor, Grace. Don't Disturb Daddy. Braden Press, 1978. Fiction. Cost: $4.75.

Cummings, Betty S. Let a River Be. Atheneum Press, 1978. Fiction. For grade 8 and up. Cost: $8.95.

Daringer, Helen Fern. Adopted Jane. Illustrated by Kate Seredy. Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1947. 252 pages for an older child.(3rd grade and up.)

Doss, Helen. The Really Real Family. Little & Brown Publishers. Preschool Level. Summary: A special book about adoption which covers the topic as a child would see it.

DuPrau, Jeanne. Adoption: The Facts, Feelings, & Issues of a Double Heritage. Messner Press, 1981. 128 pages for grade 7 and up. Cost: $8.79.

Dward, Jeanette W. I Have a Question God. Broadman Press, 1981. For grades 3-7. Cost: $4.95.

Gates, Doris. Sensible Kate. Illustrated by Majorie Torrey. Viking Press, 1943. For an older child: 189 pages.

Gordon, Shirley. The Boy Who Wanted a Family. Illustrated by Charles Robinson. Harper & Row Publishers, 1980. For grades 1-4. 96 pages. Fiction. Cost: $7.95.

Haywood, Carolyn. Here's a Penny. Harcourt & Brace, 1944.

Haywood, Carolyn. Penny and Peter. Harcourt, 1946.

Kornitzer, Margaret. The Hollywell Family. Illustrated by Shirley Hughes. Chatto, Bodley Head & Jonathan, 1980. 32 pages. For grades 1-4. Cost: $6.50. Part of the Merrimack Book Series.

Lapsley, Susan. I am Adopted. Illustrated by Michael Charlton. Bradbury Press, 1975. Preschool Level, 32 pages. Cost: $4.95.

Livingston, Carole. Why Was I Adopted? Illustrated by Arthur Robin. Lyle Stewart Inc., 1978. Summary: A simple explanation of the facts of adoption. Preschool level.

Meredith, Judith C. And Now We Are a Family. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971. Preschool level.

Miles, Micka. Aaron's Door. Boston: Little, Brown, 1978. Summary: For ages 6-10. Describes the feelings of a young boy entering an adoptive home.

Milgram, Mary. Brothers Are All the Same. New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978. K-2nd grade. Summary: Playmates question sisters about whether their adopted brother can be a real brother. Excellent photographs.

Neufeld, John. Edgar Allen. Illustrated by Loren Dunlap. S.G. Phillips Publisher, 1968. For grades 5-8. Cost: $8.95.

Overhil', Esther. Jenny's Adopted Brother. Harper, 1952.

Pursell, Margaret S. A Look at Adoption. Lerner Publications, 1977. For grades 3-6. Cost: $4.95.

Roth, Arthur J. The Secret Love of Elmtree. New York: Four Winds Press, 1976.

Scott, Elaine. Adoption. New York: Watts, 1980. 58 pages - older child.

Silman, Roberta. Somebody Else's Child. New York: Warne, 1976.

Stahl, Hilda. Elizabeth Gail & the Terrifying News. Lyndale Press, 1981. For grades 4-8. Cost: $1.95.

Stein, Sara B. The Adopted One. Illustrated by Erika Stone. Walker & Company, 1979.

Storr, Catherine. Vicky. Faber & Faber P blishers, 1981. For grades 6-9. Cost: $12.95.

Swartley, David W. My Friend, My Brother. Illustrated by James Converse. Herald Press, 1980. For grades 6 and up. Cost: Paperback($2.95) and Hardcover($4.50).

Warren, Mary P. Walk in My Moccasins. Illustrated by Victor Mays. Westminster Press, 1966. For grades 4-6. Cost: $4.95. Available in large print.

Wassons, Valentina P. The Chosen Baby. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1950. Preschool level.

Waybill, Marjorie. Chinese Eyes. NACAC Press, 1982. Cost: $5.95.

PARENT'S BOOKS

Berman. Claire. We Take This Child---A Candid Look At Modern Adoption. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1974.

Bohman, Michael. Adopted Children and Their Parents. Proprius, Stockholm, 1970.

Burgess, Linda Cannon. The Art of Adoption. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981.

Cady, Ernest. We Adopted Three. William Sloane Associates, 1952.

Carney, Anne. No More Here and There: Adopting the Older Child. University of North Carolina Press, 1976.

Doss, Carl and Helen. If You Adopt a Child. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1957. Summary: A complete handbook for childless couples planning to adopt a child. The Dosses themselves are adoptive parents, and they cover just about everything a couple planning to adopt a child needs to know.

Erikson, E.H. Childhood and Society. New York: Norton, 1965.

Felker, Evelyn. Raising Other People's Kids. Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981.

Jewitt, Claudin. Adopting the Older Child. Massachusetts: Howard Courman Press, 1978.

Kirk, H.D. Shared Fate: A Theory of Adoptive and Mental Health. New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964.

Kranik, Patricia J. Adopting Children with Special Needs. Washington: Colophen Press, 1977.

Ladner, Joyce. Mixed Families: Adoption Across Racial Boundaries. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977.

Lasnik, Robert S. A Parent's Guide to Adoption. New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 1979.

Michaels, Ruth and Rondell, Florence. The Adopted Family. Crown Revised Edition, 1965. Summary: Contains two books Book I: You and Your Child-which is a guide for adaptive parents and Book II - The Family That Grew -which is a picture book for children.

Raynor, Lois. Adoption of Non-White Children. London: Allen and Unwin, 1970.

Seglow, J. Pringle and Wedge, R. Growing Up Adopted. Slough: NFER, 1972.

Raymond, Louise. Adoption and After. Harper and Row, 1955. Summary: Covers all phases of adoption and its aftermath, including specific procedures for telling the child he is adopted.

Rowe, J. Yours by Choice. London: Routledge and Kegan Pual, 1969.

Varma, Ved P. Stresses In Children. University of London Press Ltd., 1973.

Wishard, Laurie. Adoption: The Grafted Tree. Cragmont Press, 1979.

FILMSTRIPS

1. UNDERSTANDING CHANGES IN THE FAMILY - For grades K-3rd. Deals with changes in the family - from the arrival of a new baby to a grandparent's death - are often bewildering to young children, and understanding these changes is critical to every child's healthy development. This thoughtful program sensitively probes basic aspects of family life: the definition of family itself, sibling relationships, adoption, divorce, and death. The program is designed to provide young children with opportunities to express emotions related to family living.
***Available through: Guidance Associates
Communications Park, Box 3000
Mount Kisco, New York 10549

ADOPTED CHILDREN OR FAMILIES NEED SUPPORT OR HELP - WHERE DO THEY GO?

Following is a list of agencies which offer help for the adopted child or their family. Some are support groups and others are counseling services. All of these associations are available to people who need help or support.

1. Bensenville Home Society (FOR PARENTS)
   331 South York Road
   Bensenville, Illinois 60106
   (312) 766-5800

   This agency places a limited number of children. They present an Adoption Today meeting monthly for education and information on issues of adoption.

2. Families of Adopted Children of Every Skin(FACES) - (FOR PARENTS)
   627 Lake Avenue
   Wilmette, Illinois 60091
   Contact: Joan Sargent (312) 251-0591 "or"
   Jane Haltz (312) 446-8539
   Membership: $6 annually.
   Group Objectives: To provide support services to members who are mainly parents of internationally adopted children.

3. Parent and Childbirth Education Society (PACES) - (FOR PARENTS)
   P.O. Box 213
   Western Springs, Illinois 60558
   Contact: Becky Preston, (312) 579-5005 "or" Susan Gittings, (312) 848-1630
   Groups Objective: To support and educate families concerning the development of children in general. . Specifically, the group helps put people in need of guidance or information in touch with peers who have already been through a similiar, i.e., helpline system for parents with adopted children.
   **There are seminars and a $15.00 membership annually.

4. Parents of Adopted Children Together(PACT) - (FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN)
   714 North Scott Street
   Wheaton, Illinois 60187
   Contact: Richard Kepner, (312) 690-7356
   Group's Objective: To provide support(emotionally and psychologically) for adoptive families after placement. No membership fee.

5. Dial-Law - Recorded message on the rights of adopted children and parents. Call (312) 644-0800. Ask to hear Tape #11(Adoption) - Laws in Illinois.

6. Adoption Information Center of Illinois - Toll Free # 800-572-2390. They offer a fantastic booklet called, Adoption: A Guide to Adoption in Illinois.

7. Easter House
   211 East Chicago Ave.
   Chicago, Illinois (312) 372-1254
   They have: Counseling Service free of charge for parents, children, and families.

8. Illinois State Of Children and Family Services
Department: Adoption Information
1439 South Michigan Ave.
(312) 793-2160

9. Crisis Line for Adults with emergency pressures or problems:
Call 769-6200 and ask for the CRISIS WORKER.
24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

10. Child and Adolescent Services
4545 North Damen
2nd floor
For an appointment call: 769-6200 and ask for the Child and Adolescent Services.
Open daily 10-6pm.
You can expect:
1. A variety of services for families with children from infancy through 17.
2. Groups for parents and their children, individual and family counseling.
3. Psychological testing and psychiatric evaluation if needed.
4. A policy of coordinating the child's mental health counseling with school personnel.
5. Ongoing consultation with schools in the community mental health center service area.

11. Consultation and Education Services
4545 North Damen
1st floor
For information call 878-4300, ext. 1455, 9-5pm.
You can expect:
1. Inexpensive courses on such topics as single parenting, assertiveness, coping with divorce, adoption, stepfamilies, widowhood, and child development.
2. Speakers for your schools and organizations.
3. Staff development training.
4. Social skills training for 7th grade students.
5. A High School Transition Program for 8th grade students.
6. Information on mental health topics, resources and activities.
7. Consultation to Industry and Employee Assistance Programming.

12. PARENTAL STRESS
For troubled parents who cannot interact constructively with children.
Meets every Tuesday from 7:30-9:30pm at 4545 N. Winchester
Room #8223.

"PACKET"

Committee on Adoption and Dependent Care

Adoption of the Hard-to-Place Child

The Committee on Adoption and Dependent Care reaffirms its position that adoption is a positive social process that provides a family for children whose parents cannot rear them. A permanent family is a primary need of all young children and the majority of older children. The handicapped child is also best served by a stable and secure placement which, in turn, offers ideal conditions for effective medical treatment of the child's particular condition.

The needs of the child have become the center of the adoption process; this replaces the earlier emphasis on meeting the needs of the childless couple. Today, candidates for adoption include children who are school-aged, of mixed or minority heritage, mentally, physically, or emotionally handicapped; or brothers and sisters who need to be placed together. Although many couples still want to adopt a newborn infant, many other couples are opening their homes to "hard to place" children.

The factors that will made the adoption of these "special" children a reality are as follows.

SUITABLE ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Families who adopt "special needs" children experience unusual demands on their parenting skills; they must extend themselves beyond the usual time and effort required of most parents. Often these families have had experience with handicaps. For example, parents who raise children with birth defects such as Down syndrome are increasingly choosing to adopt a child with a similar special need; this is proving beneficial to all concerned.

TRAINED SOCIAL WORKERS AND SPECIAL AGENCIES

In the last six or seven years, special agencies have been developed to care for the needs of the hard-to-place child. Adoptive parent groups and adoption agencies form a national network of support, placement services, and resources for the placement of children with special needs. An additional resource was created under the Child Abuse law, Public Law 95-266, Title II, which established ten regional centers in the United States charged with promoting the adoption of handicapped and special-needs children.

KNOWLEDGEABLE PHYSICIAN

Physicians have an important impact on these adoptions by advising prospective adoptive parents, examining the child to be adopted, and providing ongoing care to the adoptee and family.

Preadoption Counseling

The pediatrician is often consulted by persons seeking to adopt a child. Preadoption counseling requires sensitivity and skill in exploring the couple's readiness to assume the responsibilities of adoptive parenthood. Several sessions may be needed to assist the family in understanding the intricacies and ongoing demands of a special-needs or handicapped child. Referral to an adoptive parent support group may be helpful.

Examining the Child

It is important for the pediatrician to be objective. Almost no child is truly unadoptable, provided the proper adoptive parents are found. When examining a child for adoption, the physician should make a careful appraisal of physical condition, developmental level, and emotional status. The physician should secure appropriate special studies and consultations in order to advise the agency and/or the prospective parents of the immediate as well as the long-term problems involved.

Providing Ongoing Care

The pediatrician should become the adoptee's personal physician and advocate. The physician should be familiar with community resources, agencies, and state and federal regulations to ensure that the adoptee receives the maximum training and support.

This statement has been approved by the Council on Child and Adolescent Health.

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APPROPRIATE FINANCIAL AID AND SUBSIDY

One obstacle that has kept these children in foster care and has hindered their adoption is the fact that many of them have ongoing medical problems that require special treatment, appliances, and extra care. Some states now provide financial aid to couples adopting handicapped children. The Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980, which provides for federal fiscal participation in subsidy programs for eligible children, is now law and should facilitate the adoption of more waiting children.

COMMITTEE ON ADOPTION AND DEPENDENT CARE
S. Norman Sherry, MD, Chairman
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Helen Felitto, Child Welfare League of America
Elaine Schwartz, Children's Bureau, Department of Health and Human Services

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North American Center on Adoption: Adoption Report. New York, Child Welfare League of America, Inc, vol 4, Summer 1979

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Who Knows Who Cares? Forgotten Children in Foster Care. 1979 Report of National Commission on Children in Need of Parents. New York, Child Welfare League of America, Inc

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WEEDS

... I like weeds for the very reason that most people abhor them. Weeds are very tough. Biologically speaking, weeds unhesitatingly root where the angels in the plant world fear to tread.

I think I admire weeds because our species has so much in common with them. The inventiveness of culture does for humankind what evolution did for weeds: It enables us to colonize with awesome efficiency. No environment presents too great a challenge. We are, in many ways, the dandelions of the primate world.

Submitted by Student

From John C. Kricher, *The New York Times*, July 12, 1981.

MY OPINION

Ultimately it is society itself that must take care of the future for children, all children. I wrote this paper with much thought and research, but there is still more information available. This paper performs the valuable function of bringing these adopted children to our notice. I feel that even though the adopted child's birth may not have been an occasion for rejoicing, they may all find happiness in their lives.

Yes, the stress is there. Stress is present in all walks of life, especially for the child who is adopted. They are vulnerable to stressful life experiences. Coping with the stress for these children not only involves the ways I have already mentioned. The future will bring new developments and hopefully people, teachers, and communities will become more involved.

I spent much time discussing foster care with my mother who personally lived in a foster home. Not only did I learn what sad things some children face, I also learned a lot about my mother. My mother and her brothers lived with a couple for one year, then the state took them away. They were beaten, not given food, and were severely punished. I did not go into this side of foster care because I tried to focus on the stresses during adoption. I am mentioning foster care now so that we do not overlook those children as well. This paper holds much personal value for me because of my mother's own experience in a foster home and orphanage. This factor in itself led me to a better understanding of the stress in the adoption experience.

I feel that the adult's task is to provide immediate support and a bank of alternatives that the child may draw upon in the future. Any child who becomes extremely disorganized by stressful life experiences may struggle much harder to surmount the experiences if they had sources of alternatives for coping with life. In our society we need more people forming support groups and getting involved in helping others cope with stress.

The many books written on adopted children published in the last fifteen years is evidence of our desire to learn better ways to cope with the stress involved. Adoption education should be offered as a separate course in colleges for adoptive parents and people who want to learn more about the adoption experience. I also feel that if we could change our stereotypical ways of viewing and describing families, children who are adopted would not feel strange and different. The adopters, adopted, and birth parents are inexorably bound to one another but they live in different worlds of perception.

I spoke to one social worker who has dealt with adopted children and their families for ten years. She said that the last ten years have been a learning experience and she learns something new every new day. I realized after talking to her that there is no stopping point for learning. We learn and learn and learn, but we never even touch on all the many things there are to know. The stress follows us through life, but it can be positive. We have to learn to turn stress into a positive trip. Each day I realize more how much children need support. The children out there need teachers, parents, and a society willing to give of themselves. Especially being in teacher education, we need to give the children support and be willing to get involved.

CONCLUSION

I know myself that stress can be all different things for all different people. I basically handle life calmly, but I am lucky to have a nature like that. There are still one or two things that cause me stress. My pet stress is not having enough time. I am a person who is always doing something. If I am not working, I am reading, if I am not reading I am writing. Anyway, while working on this paper I tried to work out my days better so that I had more time for me. It is amazing how some stresses can be avoided. If you can find out your worst

form of stress there usually are ways to reduce it.

For the adopted child the stress may not be the minimal problem of finding time to relax. They face a series of stressors which can upset their lives. This paper is just a beginning to understanding the adopted child's frustration. I feel more prepared to face an adopted child in the classroom. I keep seeing the facts before me and I know the key is involvement. Society, people, teachers, and doctor all need to get involved in children's lives. I realize the younger children will be taught by my generation. We will be setting the stage for them, so to speak. We need people who understand the stress in a child's life. This paper and research is just a beginning of all the accumulated knowledge there is out there. This research has opened my own eyes to the topic of adoption. I plan on continuing to learn more about adopted children and I hope you will too.

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